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ABSTRACT

Questions and answers on North Carolina's Senate Bill 2, the School Improvement and Accountability Act, are presented in this booklet. General information about governance, assessment, and funding is provided in the first section. The next section explains setting specific student performance targets in the form of performance indicators. The issue of differentiated pay is clarified in the third section, focusing on the pay plan that offers a bonus or supplement to persons who perform extra work to develop their school's improvement plan. (LMI)

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NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

An Invitation to School Improvement in North Carolina

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

School Improvement and Accountability Act

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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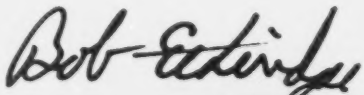
Questions & Answers on Senate Bill 2

Senate Bill 2, the School Improvement and Accountability Act, offers many opportunities and challenges to local school systems. Local teachers and other educators are working very diligently to develop local school and district plans before the spring deadlines.

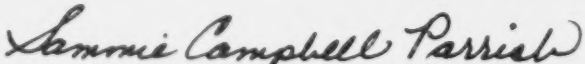
Naturally, the complexity of this massive education improvement program has prompted many questions. And, new questions continue to arise every day.

The staff of the Department of Public Instruction is making every effort to help local educators prepare their plans. Regional education center staff members are out working with local planning committees every day and Raleigh staffers are fine tuning state plans for implementation.

Questions & Answers on Senate Bill 2 is the second in a series of publications about this important legislation. It represents the best thinking in the Department of Public Instruction regarding questions raised by local school administrators and DPI staff. We hope it will be helpful in preparing to implement Senate Bill 2.



Bob Etheridge
State Superintendent



Dr. Sammie Campbell Parrish
Assistant State Superintendent,
Program Services

GENERAL

Q

1. Can an LEA (Local Education Agency) school improvement plan under the performance-based accountability program include some schools in the LEA and not others?

A

Yes. However, the milestone measures will be applied to the LEA as a unit including all schools in the district.

Q

2. May individual schools within the unit elect not to participate in the unit's plan?

A

When an LEA participates in the Performance-Based Accountability Program of Senate Bill 2, its participation will be considered as a unit regardless of the number of individual schools that participate. Although an LEA may allow individual schools not to participate, the performance indicators will be applied to the system as a whole.

Q

3. Will the State Agency provide a "proto-type" plan as an example for LEAs?

A

No. Regional education center directors, however, have been working directly with LEAs that have requested more help with plan development. In several cases, small work groups have developed sample plans as a way of better understanding the steps involved in plan development.

Q

4. May LEAs revise or rewrite local school improvement plans each year?

A

LEAs must review their progress annually. The goals of the LEA cannot be modified yearly, but strategies, actions, waiver requests and flexible funding requests may be changed from year to year, if approved.

Q

5. Do all schools have to enter into a school improvement plan in order to participate in the performance-based accountability program — even though they may already meet most accreditation standards?

A

Yes. School improvement plans should first address performance goals not yet met. If all are met, the LEA can identify additional performance indicators and set targets higher than state accreditation standards for some goals.

Q

6. What happens if we do not choose a plan in our county?

A

Participation in the Performance-Based Accountability Program of Senate Bill 2 is optional. LEAs that choose to participate also have the option of whether or not to have a differentiated pay plan. LEAs that do not choose to participate in the Performance-Based Accountability Program will be subject to both the performance standards and the opportunity standards of the new State accreditation program.

Additionally, LEAs that do not choose to participate during 1990-91 may choose to enter the program during year two or three.

Q

7. Will LEAs be allowed flexibility in using Basic Education Program (BEP) positions as long as there is an assurance that the BEP curriculum is available to students?

A

Yes. Flexible use of BEP positions is allowable as long as the full instructional program that is called for by the BEP is offered. The implementation schedule denotes what program components must be in place and when.

Q

8. If an LEA wishes to convert funds for textbooks, instructional materials, supplies and equipment, testing support, etc., into personnel, can this be done without a waiver?

A

No. A waiver must be requested to do so because personnel is not one of the categories that has been collapsed into a single category under SB 115C — 238.5 of the law.

Q

9. For new positions under the BEP, may an LEA request a waiver and convert some of these positions to dollars?

A

Yes. A waiver may be requested so long as the LEA can demonstrate that it plans to offer the instructional program required under the BEP according to the BEP implementation schedule.

Q

10. Do you have to ask for a waiver to buy textbooks that are not State adopted textbooks?

A

Yes.

Q

11. What is the latitude regarding vocational courses offered by LEAs?

A

School systems have flexibility in offering vocational programs/courses based on the vocational needs of students identified by the LEAs. Scheduling and time duration for the courses are determined by the local system.

With regard to funding flexibility, 1/3 of the State months of employment for vocational education are included in the funding flexibility provision under Senate Bill 2. The remaining 2/3 months of employment for vocational education must be reserved for vocational education, as dictated by federal matching requirements.

Q

12. Will the review process be structured? Who will serve on the review team?

A

Yes. As of yet, however, the internal review process has not been finalized. It is anticipated that the plans will be reviewed by top level management in DPI who will seek input from other appropriate persons in the agency. Recommendations will then be made to the State Superintendent. DPI staff will work closely with local superintendents to address any concerns regarding unit plans. If necessary, face-to-face conferences will be held to resolve any differences or to seek clarifications needed to win plan approval.

Q

13. Will Senate Bill 2 be funded?

A

The General Assembly will make this decision. It is anticipated that the Legislature will fund the differentiated pay plan option in Senate Bill 2 as outlined in the law.

Q

14. Can LEAs request waivers from federal laws and requirements?

A

No.

Q

15. Can any of the requirements of PL 94-142, The Education of All Handicapped Children, be waived?

A

No. The state and LEAs have a moral and legal responsibility to provide an appropriate education to all handicapped children as outlined in PL 94-142. As with all federal laws, these requirements may not be waived.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Q

16. What is a source for obtaining examples of performance goals for use in developing a Performance-Based Accountability Plan for Senate Bill 2?

A

On Oct. 15, 1989, each LEA submitted to DPI an annual report under the new State accreditation program. This report details the standing of the LEA on each of the 30 indicators with the exception of the SAT. This report is the place to begin. Additionally, the Office of Research and Development Services is developing preliminary report card information which takes into account local demographic variables. This information should help the LEA in setting its annual milestones and in assessing areas of strengths and weaknesses.

Q

17. When will sample student performance goals developed by the Division of Research and Development be available for school systems?

A

The required student performance indicators of Senate Bill 2 are the same indicators used as performance indicators in state accreditation. The LEA simply sets its targets based on local considerations.

With regard to the indicators to be used from the optional set selected by LEAs which already meet most standards, the Office of Research and Development in DPI stands ready to assist local educators, upon request. Any additional indicators added to the LEA unit plan must be student performance indicators.

Q

18. In light of the compressed planning process, could a system have three year benchmarks that are not numerical? For instance:

Goal: Increase SAT scores.

Accountability Benchmarks:

Year 1: Voluntary test taking skill workshops offered; intend to have at least 50 participants.

Teams of teachers analyze where students are doing poorly on SATs and develop teaching material for English and math teachers.

Year 2: Test taking skill workshops continued; goal of training at least 60 students; all students are encouraged to retake the tests and parents and students are invited to informational sessions about the SAT.

New teaching techniques included in English and math instruction.

Year 3: SAT scores increase by at least 15 points.

A

No. The targets you have listed for year 1 and year 2 are considered inputs or opportunities rather than student outcomes. All student performance goals in the LEA unit plan must be stated in terms of measurable student outcomes. The annual milestones must include specific student performance targets. It is certainly understandable that targets for year one may be modest since it will take time to get programs "up and running" and for these programs and strategies to have a positive impact on students. We anticipate that LEAs may set less ambitious targets during year one, but that they will project increasingly ambitious milestones as the program progresses — years two, three, four and five.

Q

19. The guidelines state that an LEA must address all indicators adopted by the State Board of Education. Is it acceptable, in addressing all indicators, to state maintenance milestones for some indicators?

A

Yes, under certain circumstances, it is acceptable for an LEA to address some indicators by stating that the current level of performance will be maintained. For example, if the LEA performance level is at or above accreditation standards, and the unit feels that its performance is so high that it is unlikely to improve, a maintenance milestone may be used for that indicator. It must be remembered, however, that it is the local plan as a whole that will be reviewed and approved. It must be clear that the LEA has developed a plan and set targets that are likely to result in significant school improvement. An extensive number of "maintains" will not be acceptable.

Q

20. In Section E of the General Guidelines, you list 30 indicators to measure and assess students' performance. Only numbers 1 and 10 are directly applicable to our grade level, (Primary K-2). We do have Criterion Reference tests in Language Arts and Math which are developed locally. Could these be used as indicators? Would it be appropriate for us to state as our measure the results of the third grade performance at the site which receives our promoted second graders?

A

We are aware that the set of required indicators do not include sufficient indicators for the early grades and for elementary in general. Correcting this weakness will be a priority in future planning for Senate Bill 2.

In the final guidelines under I. F, you will find an invitation to select additional indicators to include in the set of indicators by which your LEA will be measured. Both of the recommendations you have made are excellent and would be acceptable from DPI's perspective. You must, of course, discuss this with your local superintendent.

Q

21. For performance accreditation standards which are currently being achieved by an LEA, must higher performance goals be set for <u>each</u> of them?

A

No, but LEAs that have already met all or most of the accreditation performance standards must set <u>some</u> higher standards. These LEAs are also encouraged to examine the performance of underachieving subgroups and schools and devise plans to raise their achievement, and may also select other indicators not currently included in the set of 30 on which to measure their progress.

DIFFERENTIATED PAY

Q

22. Can we use 2% for planning? Can 1990-91 be a planning year?

A

Yes, if properly designed. The 2% monies can be used to pay a bonus or supplement to persons who perform extra work to develop the unit's school improvement plan and a differentiated pay plan during 1990-91. In order to utilize this option, however, this one-year provision must be developed according to a differentiated task pay model and be voted on as described in the law.

Once the complete and comprehensive differentiated pay plan has been developed for the three-to-five year period, the plan will have to be put to a vote again.

Q

23. Can some schools opt not to participate in differentiated pay even though a county differentiated pay plan is voted for?

A

Yes, if this is the model that the LEA designs as its differentiated pay plan and it receives greater than 50% of the vote of each group. In determining whether or not an LEA has made satisfactory progress, however, the LEA data will be used, not data from selected schools.

Q

24. 51% — is this the total certificated personnel or of all those who vote?

A

Total certificated personnel. Greater than 50% of both the certified instruction and instructional support group on payroll and greater than 50% of the certified administrator group on the payroll in the LEA must approve the plan.

Q

25. If a pay plan is voted on county-wide, do schools that opt not to participate vote on accepting the plan?

A

Yes. All affected employees vote on the plan. The staff in the schools excluded as well as the staff in the schools included in the plan are considered to be affected by the differentiated pay plan decided upon in the district.

Q

26. Identify specifically the certified administrators who are eligible to vote on differentiated pay.

A

All certified administrators who hold positions requiring certification are eligible.

Q

27. Can individual schools choose their own individual pay plan or must they follow a county-wide plan?

A

The LEA must design one comprehensive differentiated pay plan for review and vote. Various individual school options may be included as a part of the

single comprehensive plan. Remember, all eligible voters vote on one plan — the same plan — even though there may be any number of variations accounted for in the single plan.

Q

28. May an LEA include non-certified personnel in their differentiated pay plan?

A

No, unless local funds are provided to fund that portion of the plan.

Q

29. May state personnel who are certified but working in positions which do not require certificates be included in differentiated pay plans?

A

No. The bill provides for state funds to be paid to state certified personnel holding positions which require certification.

Q

30. How can central office personnel be included in differentiated pay plans?

A

Central office personnel, for the most part, will be a part of the administrator provisions agreed upon for differentiated pay. The specific differentiated pay plan designed for administrators is left up to the LEA but must be included in the single plan voted on by all affected employees of the district.

Q

31. Will accepting one of these differentiated pay plans eliminate across-the-board raises?

A

No. Accepting a differentiated pay plan will not exclude an LEA from receiving other legislative pay raises, such as cost of living, which are applied across the board. A differentiated pay plan, of course, may not provide an across-the-board raise.

Q

32. Would a new plan take away our current local supplement?

A

The differentiated pay monies available through Senate Bill 2 are unrelated to the issue of local salary supplements.

Q

33. How much local money will be needed to cover the 2% for local employees?

A

This will depend upon the number of local certified employees on the local payroll, as well as on the details of the locally developed differentiated pay plan.

Q

34. Is there a quota as to the number of persons who may receive differentiated pay?

A

There is no quota on the number of persons that may receive differentiated pay unless such a quota is built into the differentiated pay plan approved in the LEA.

Q

35. How is money allocated to individual schools?

A

In a school-based differentiated pay plan, money is allocated to individual schools according to the details spelled out in the locally-developed differentiated pay plan designed and voted upon in the LEA.

Q

36. Once you receive the added pay, do you keep it forever?

A

No. Bonus pay or differentiated pay supplements are paid for one year. Of course, they may be earned again during following years.

Q

37. How much is each LEA's 2% supplement?

A

The Office of Financial Services will be sending out forms to assist LEAs in calculating their 2% differentiated pay supplement.

Q

38. What has been the success of the pilot Career Development Programs and how have the staffs in the pilot units viewed the program?

A

We suggest you talk with pilot LEAs in your regions.

Q

39. Can there be more than one plan per county?

A

There must be one single plan per LEA, although the plan may contain a number of different provisions for different groups and situations.

Q

40. Must the LEA plan be for three years, four years, five years, etc.?

A

The LEA plan may be either a three-year plan, four-year plan, or five-year plan. In addition to the 3 - 5 year goals, however, annual milestones must be delineated for each year leading to the final target year.

Q

41. May 2% funds be used for locally and/or federally-paid certified personnel?

A

No. Differentiated pay monies from the state can be used to pay bonuses to state-paid certified personnel only. We are seeking further clarification on this point, however.

Q

42. What percentage of objectives must a school or teacher meet in order to qualify for differentiated pay? (Example: If teacher A has identified four objectives, must she meet all four or only two?)

A

The percentage of objectives which a school or teacher must meet in order to qualify for differentiated pay is dependent upon the details and provisions of the differentiated pay plan that is developed and voted upon in the school district. Differentiated pay will be administered by the local education agency. DPI simply distributes to the unit the money that is appropriated by the Legislature. Units may continue to receive differentiated pay monies as long as the unit is making satisfactory progress.

Q

43. May any unspent differentiated pay funds be carried over until the next year?

A

We have been informed that differentiated pay monies may not be carried over until the next fiscal year.